

Cyclamen Mites

Many household plants can be seriously damaged by the cyclamen mite, *Phytonemus pallidus*. African violets, chrysanthemums, geraniums, and of course, cyclamen are good host plants for the cyclamen mite. Good indications of having cyclamen mite infestation include crinkled, curled leaves, streaked or blotched leaves, and flower buds that fail to open.

The cyclamen mite is very tiny, reaching a length of 1/100 of an inch (Fig. 1). They can only be seen with a magnifier and therefore often go undetected until the plants are seriously damaged. The adult mites are oval in shape and appear to be



Figure 1. Cyclamen mite damage on African violet.
Photo credit: James Baker, NCSU.

a transparent white to orange-pink in color. The females and males can be distinguished by their hind legs. The female has thread like hind legs and the male has pincer like hind legs.

Female cyclamen mites lay eggs on the foliage and around the base of the plant. She lays up to 90 eggs in her lifetime. The eggs hatch into a six-legged larva stage of which 80% are females. The larvae molt into an eight-legged nymph stage which is a resting stage. The adults then emerge and start the process all over again. From egg to adult takes about

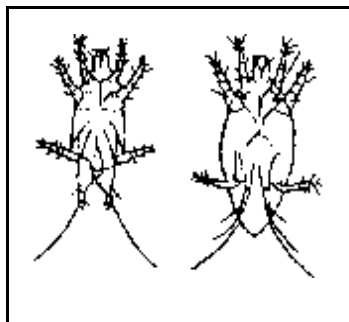


Figure 2: Male (left) and female (right) cyclamen mites

2 weeks. All life-stages can be found on the plants at any given time. These mites prefer temperatures around 60°F and relative humidity around 80-90%.

The cyclamen mite is easily moved from plant to plant on hands and clothing. If an infested plant is touched, the hands should be washed before touching another plant. Plants, pot included, can be immersed in hot water (110°F) for 15-30 minutes for effective control. Areas of the plant with heavy infestation should be cut off and thrown away before immersing the plant into the water. Registered miticides are available and if used, the label must be followed exactly. Current recommended miticides and application rates are available at your local county extension office.

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